



One of my earliest Sexual Memories is looking at the cover of a Bugs Bunny VHS tape I had rented from the video store. This was in the early 1990s, and I was six or seven years old.

The image is of Bugs Bunny bound to a post. One rope is wrapped around his shoulders and another around his ears. The rope has been rendered with a little more detail than normal—each twist and frayed end has been elaborated. Four drops of sweat run down Bugs Bunny's brow. He looks up in a state of wide-eyed alarm.

I rented the VHS tape because I was hoping to learn why this was happening to Bugs Bunny, who had done it, and what happens next. To my dismay, I discovered that the cartoons on the videotape had no correlation to the cover image. There was no escape.

This was more than I could handle as a child. I hid the VHS tape behind a pillow on the couch. When I was alone I would pull the pillow back and look at it, then cover it again. I was obsessed with it, and deeply ashamed.

Looking at it now, I understand why. A cartoon character is attractive because it is simple. The lack of specificity allows you to see yourself in it. Bugs Bunny, therefore, is a surrogate for self. In this cartoon, however, your surrogate looks back at you, and waits for you to do something bad to him. To look at Bugs Bunny looking at you is to simultaneously occupy a dominant and submissive position. It is an unstable proposition.

I think of this VHS cover as an icon. It's not exactly a devotional aid, but looking at it allows me to access the elastic sexuality of a cartoon, where contradictions can exist without reconciliation.

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